

Washington, DC -- In preparation for congressional action, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) hosted a Health Care Forum today with local health care experts to discuss expanding access to quality, affordable health care for the 46 million Americans without health insurance.

“I’m here to learn from you,” **Arcuri told panelists at his Health Care Forum today.** “I believe that your expertise will help me best represent the interests of our region as Congress seeks to bring down sky-rocketing costs and put us on a path to comprehensive health care reform. I will continue to fight to make sure more families in Upstate New York have access to quality, affordable health care.”

Arcuri collected insight from a wide range of experts and local practitioners regarding current issues facing the health care system as well as proposed solutions. The forum included three panels of experts: Doctors and Nurses; Hospital Administrators and Health Insurance Providers; and representatives from the small business community and consumer advocacy organizations. In addition, prepared remarks were shared on behalf of the National Patient Advocate Foundation.

“I know we can all agree that the health of Americans comes first – and that Congress must work in a bipartisan way to achieve true health care reform,” **Arcuri continued.** “The panelists I’ve brought together today are an invaluable source of information, advice, and suggestions for how I can best represent the health care needs of Upstate New Yorkers in Washington.

Since taking office, Arcuri has voted repeatedly for legislation to expand and improve the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to provide health care to over 10 million uninsured children nationwide, including 396,042 children enrolled in New York’s SCHIP program (CHPlus). Nearly 19,000 local children in the 24th congressional district were covered by CHPlus in 2007. Arcuri voted twice to override vetoes by President Bush to expand SCHIP for 10 million uninsured children.

Earlier this year, Arcuri was honored by the Children’s Defense Fund Action Council (CDFAC) as one of the “Best Representatives for Children” for voting 100% of the time to protect the health and well-being of children. The CDFAC award is based on the organization’s 2007 Nonpartisan Congressional Scorecard, which grades every Member of Congress based on key

votes affecting children.

“I will continue to fight to expand the SCHIP program for New York’s low income children, because this is a commonsense, preventative solution that helps ensure taxpayers don’t foot the bill when uninsured kids require emergency room treatment – but this is just the beginning,” **said Arcuri**

. “Local businesses are being crushed by sky-rocketing health care costs, hurting our economy and our families. It is time for Democrats and Republican to come together and fix our broken system once and for all.”

In addition to fighting for children’s health care, Arcuri voted to strengthen the Medicare program for 44 million seniors and people with disabilities by stopping a scheduled 10 percent cut in Medicare payments to doctors. The Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (H.R. 6331), which became law in July after Arcuri joined a bipartisan majority of his colleagues to override a presidential veto, also ensured continued access to care for military retirees and active-duty personnel by preventing a similar payment cut to doctors participating in the TRICARE program.

Among other critical improvements, H.R. 6331 strengthened rural health care by increasing Medicare payments to critical access hospitals and sole community hospitals, extending payment equity provisions for rural physicians and hospitals, and increasing access to tele-health services for rural beneficiaries.

“During today’s forum, a number of issues facing our existing health care system were discussed, but all parties agreed that improving access to health care in rural communities must be a priority,” **Arcuri said**. “Upstate New Yorkers shouldn’t have to drive 50 miles to see a doctor – we need to ensure folks have close and reliable access to health care professionals no matter where they reside. Countless studies show that preventative care can allow people to avoid costly surgeries down the road and save taxpayers money by reducing trips to hospital emergency rooms.”

Arcuri has also voted for vital public health legislation to support cutting-edge research into cures for diseases at the National Institutes of Health, to expand federal funding for stem cell research, and to care for our wounded warriors with the largest increase in funding for veterans health care in the Veterans Administration’s 77-year history.

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